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THE SEMASIOLOGY OF *SCHENKEN* 'SKINK.'

JACOB Grimm endeavored to explain the obvious connection between *schenken* and O. E. *scanca* 'crus, tibia,' M. H. G. *schinke* 'crus, perna,' *schenkel* 'femur' by conjecturing 'dass man in frühster zeit das getränk mit einer (knöchernen?) röhre aus dem fass laufen liess;' <sup>1</sup> 'die bedeutung tibia mochte leicht auf die röhre des gefässes führen, aus dem man einschenkte.'<sup>2</sup> This explanation was, for lack of a better one, quite generally accepted; the main objection to it was that a people who knew how to make casks were not likely to use so primitive a tap or faucet as a hollow bone. In view of this difficulty, Weigand<sup>3</sup> took up Grimm's suggestion<sup>4</sup> of the possible existence in O. H. G. of a verb *\*skinkan* and considered *schenken* as a causal of that verb, attributing to the latter the meaning 'durchhingehen' invented ad hoc. But the verb *\*skinkan* is too problematical; and the explanation of O. E. *scanca* ('der durchhingehende Knochen') to which Weigand is driven, would, so far as it goes, be equally apposite to a number of other bones and fails utterly to account for the commoner use of the word in the sense of 'femur, perna,' the only meaning attaching to the German cognate *schenkel*.

J. Franck,<sup>5</sup> in a review of Kluge's *Etym. Wb.*<sup>5</sup>, rejected Grimm's etymology as a 'blosser einfall' unsupported by any evidence as to the use of hollow bones as taps or of the name of any bone to designate a tube generally. Grimm, however, builded better than he knew. It is doubtful whether the more indefinite 'gefäss' which he in the *Kleinere Schriften* wisely substituted for the improbable 'fass' of his earlier statement, may be construed as applicable also to the earliest large receptacle

<sup>1</sup> *D. Gr.* 2. 60.<sup>2</sup> *Kl. Schr.* 2. 179.<sup>3</sup> *Wb.*<sup>4</sup> 2. 564.<sup>4</sup> *D. Gr.* 2. 60.<sup>5</sup> *Anz. f. d. A.* 21. 306 f.

for liquids, the skin; but in any case, something like the device that was vaguely in Grimm's mind is occasionally found at the present day in countries where skins are still used. In Palestine, for instance, may be seen goatskins with straight, tapering tubes in their necks,<sup>6</sup> for the better control of the outflow; and if this device dates back to early times, it is likely enough that the tube consisted at first in a hollow bone. Franck objects that it is difficult to explain the meaning of Germ. *\*skankion* 'schenk' as derived from that of a noun *\*skank-* 'beinröhre,' and that it would hardly be 'sprachgemäss' to speak of a 'hahnist,' as we do of a 'hornist,' or to call a 'zapfer' a 'pfeifer' even in parts of Germany where a 'pfeife' means a 'tube.' His first point is not clear; for if, as Grimm's theory presupposes, our forefathers closely associated with the word *\*skank-* the idea of a 'tap,' then the verb *\*skankjan* and the nomen agentis *\*skankion* are as easily explained as the Gothic *haurñjan* and *haurñja*, or as *zapfen* 'to tap' and *zapfer* 'tapster.' The remainder of Franck's argument is curiously irrelevant; 'sprachgemässheit' is in the last resort purely and simply a matter of usage, not of conformity to the rules of word-formation or to any other philological abstraction.

What Franck himself offers in lieu of Grimm's theory is equally unsatisfactory. He is doubtless right in etymologically dissociating *schank* in the sense of 'cupboard' from the synonymous *schränk*, of which it was supposed to be merely a variant, and in explaining it as properly denoting a 'gestell für trinkgeräte,' like the borrowed Low Lat. and Ital. *scancia* and the cognate *schenke* 'schenktisch, büffet' of Northern Germany; the English 'cupboard' shows precisely the same development. But to derive the verb *schenken* from the noun *schank*<sup>7</sup> is clearly to reverse the natural order of things. It is self-evident that there was skinking and a verb denoting this act, long before a 'gestell für trinkgeräte' came into use; and we have no reason whatever for supposing that the original verb was lost and that a new one was derived from *schank*. As between *schenken* and

<sup>6</sup> For an illustration, see Sir Charles Wilson's *Picturesque Palestine*, 2. 32.

<sup>7</sup> This derivation is now quoted by Kluge, *Et. Wb.*<sup>6</sup> 336, but without endorsement.

*shank* all the evidence available points to the priority of the verb. The latter is found in most of the Germanic dialects and must date back to Primitive Germanic, while *shank* in the sense of 'cupboard' makes its appearance comparatively late and is restricted to parts of Germany. The form and inflection of *shank* suggest that the word was primarily a verbal abstract like *trank*, *schwank*, *flug*, etc., and denoted 'a pouring or serving of drink;' and this is actually the only meaning of it in O. N. (*skenkr*), besides being the only one that has remained in common use in German. From it alone, moreover, can the diverse other meanings attaching to the word at different times in the various dialects be easily and naturally derived; Franck's 'gestell für trinkgeräte' as a starting point would be out of the question.

More recently, the etymology of *schenken* was discussed by F. A. Wood,<sup>8</sup> who thinks it probable 'that "shank" was named because it was hollow like the horns or drinking cups in use, and that "skink" meant to pour from the drinking cup.' But even if the similarity between a horn or cup and a shankbone were less remote than it is, the probability would still be that the shank was named *before* the cup or horn, especially if the cup, as Wood thinks possible, was itself made out of a shankbone. Above all, there is no warrant for the assumption (due, apparently, to a misunderstanding of Grimm's view) that 'shank' denoted originally a 'shankbone;' both in English<sup>9</sup> and in German (*schinke*) that meaning has always been comparatively rare, and in the case of German *schenkel* it has been and is entirely excluded. The statements of Heyne *D. Wb.* 9. 203 and his own *Wb.* 3. 307, Schade, and Paul concerning the priority of the meaning 'beinröhre' occasionally attaching to *schinke* rest obviously also upon a misapprehension of Grimm's theory and are not borne out either by their own citations or by those of Graff (6. 519), to whom Heyne and Schade refer; as a matter of fact, Grimm rendered *schinke* by 'crus, perna,' *schenkel* by 'femur,' and O. E. *sceanca*, to be sure, at first

<sup>8</sup> Germanic Etymologies, *Am. Germ.* 3. 323.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Bosworth-Toller, 823.

(*Gr.* 2. 60) by 'tibia, crus,' but later (*Kl. Schr.* 2. 179) more carefully by 'crus, tibia;' and he laid stress upon the 'knöch-erne röhre' only because he saw no other way of connecting the meaning of *schenzen* with that of *schenkel*, *schinke*, 'shank.' Wood is of the opinion that O. E. *scencan* 'skink' is a direct derivative from *scenc* 'cup, draught' and meant 'to pour from the drinking cup;' he sees a similar correspondence in O. E. *stéap* 'drinking vessel' (more correctly: 'stoup, pitcher, or dipper')<sup>10</sup> and O. N. *steypa* 'pour out,' and he points also to O. E. *scencing-cuppe* 'cup from which drink is poured.' But the proposed derivation is in itself improbable because the drinking cup was neither intended nor used for the purpose suggested; to the question: if mead or ale was poured *from* the drinking cup, what then was it poured *into*? there is no serious answer. Further, O. N. *steypa* does not come from a noun answering to O. E. *stéap*, but is the causal of *stúpa* 'fall, run out;' and a *scencing-cuppe* was most likely, as the modifying *scencing* shows, not an ordinary drinking cup, but like the analogous O. S. *skenkifat* (*skeinkiuaz*, Wadstein 91) of the Prudentius glosses, a 'cyathos,' a dipper or ladle.

So far then, we should still have to give the preference to the theory of J. Grimm, though it operates with a secondary and infrequent meaning of \*skank—and even then does not get beyond mere possibility. The problem of explaining the undoubted connection of *schenzen* with *schenkel* etc., admits, however, of a very simple solution that can, moreover, be thoroughly substantiated.

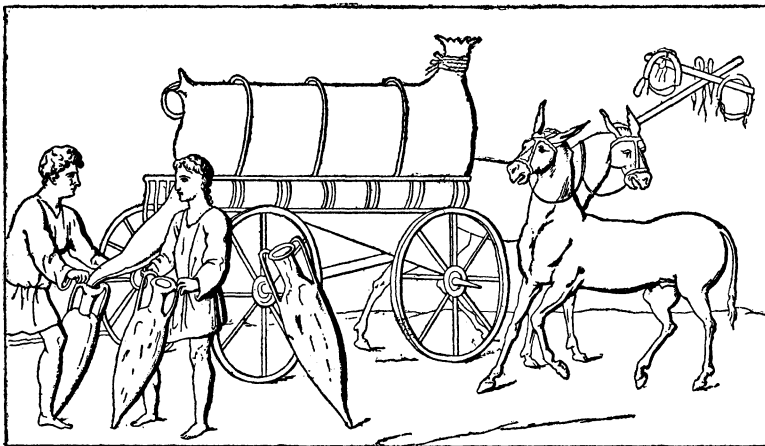
The earliest large receptacles for liquids were, as has been pointed out, skins; in Germany they remained in use to the end of the middle ages.<sup>11</sup> Now it is obvious that these skins must have been filled through their largest apertures, the necks; while, inversely, the drawing of the contents must have been done from the small openings at the tapering ends of the shanks. That this was actually the case appears from both archæological and philological evidence.

<sup>10</sup> Bosworth-Toller, 913. *steap* 'ciatum,' Wrt. Voc. 1. 290. 78.

<sup>11</sup> Schultz, *D. höf. Leben z. Z. d. Minnesinger*, 1. 410; Heyne, *D.* Wb. 9. 506.

In a tavern at Pompeii there are two wall paintings<sup>12</sup> representing the same subject, a market scene, with a marked similarity of conception and execution; a sketch of one of them is here reproduced.

The picture shows a large wine-skin on a wagon, held in an upright position by hoops; the neck of the skin is securely tied up; the tail and, we may add, the forelegs (not visible here, but clearly shown in numerous ancient sculptures) are sewed up close to the body; from one of the shanks, which is hanging



down from the rear of the wagon, the vender is drawing wine<sup>13</sup> into an amphora, while another amphora is held in readiness by the customer and a third is leaning against the wagon. The scene is evidently a typical one and taken from life. The other painting, though inferior in some of the details, is interesting because of the very realistic pose of the wine-vender, who grasps the lower part of the shank of the skin in a manner that enables

<sup>12</sup> Otto Jahn, *Über Darstellungen des Handwerks und Handelsverkehrs auf antiken Wandgemälden*, Plate 5, cf. p. 283.

<sup>13</sup> Jahn's statement (l. c. 283) that the wine is being drawn by means of a tube inserted in the skin conflicts with his own illustrations and is disproven by the description of the original paintings in H. Roux' *Herculaneum et Pompéi*, 3. 65. Compare also Guhl & Koner, *Leben der Griechen und Römer*, 703 f., where the other of the two illustrations in Jahn is reproduced.

him to compress it strongly and to stop the flow of the wine the moment the amphora is full; also, and particularly, because there the string with which the end of the shank is tied up when not in use, is seen hanging down from it.

A relief on an ancient stone sarcophagus<sup>14</sup> likewise represents a big skin resting upright on a cart, with one or both of the shanks hanging down behind. Furthermore, the peculiar Greek earthenware vessel called *ἄσκος*, which was fashioned, as the name indicates, in imitation of the wine-skin,<sup>15</sup> illustrates very clearly the points under discussion; the large opening at one end, through which it was filled, and the long, tapering spout at the other, correspond respectively, to the neck and the shank of the skin.

In Herodotus' story of the clever thief who robs Rhampsinit's treasure chamber and outwits the king at every turn, we read (2. 121): (ἔλεγον) ἐπισπάσαντα τῶν ἄσκων δύο ἢ τρεῖς ποδεῶνας αὐτὸν λύειν ἀπαμμένους· ὡς δὲ ἔρρεε ὁ οἶνος, τὴν κεφαλὴν μιν κόπτεσθαι etc. ποδεῶν is defined by the Patriarch Photius<sup>16</sup> as denoting *κυρίως τοῦ ἄσκοῦ τὰ προῦχοντα, ἥτοι*<sup>17</sup> *τῶν ποδῶν τὰ δέρματα*, and this meaning is in accordance with the derivation of the word and bears the stamp of antiquity.

More striking still in its bearing upon the problem under discussion is the familiar line (679) in the *Medea* of Euripides where Aigeus says that the oracle has enjoined him

*ἄσκοῦ με τὸν προῦχοντα μὴ λῦσαι πόδα.*<sup>18</sup>

The scholia<sup>19</sup> explains: *ἄσκοῦ οὖν τῆς γαστροῦς, πόδα δὲ τὸ μόριον, παρόσον ὡς ὁ ποδεῶν τοῦ ἄσκοῦ προέχει . . . ποδεῶνα δὲ εἰώθασι λέγειν τὸ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς αἰδοῖον*. Evidently, then,

<sup>14</sup> Jahn, l. c. Plate 5.

<sup>15</sup> A picture of one may be seen in Daremberg et Saglio, *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines*, 1. 413.

<sup>16</sup> Photii Patriarchæ Lexicon, ed. Naber, 2. 95.

<sup>17</sup> Evidently in its exegetical sense = ἥγουν.

<sup>18</sup> Similarly, in Plutarch's *Theseus* c. 3:

Ἄσκοῦ τὸν προῦχοντα πόδα, μέγα φέρτατε λαῶν,  
μὴ λυσης πρὶν δῆμον Ἀθηνέων εἰσαφικέσθαι.

<sup>19</sup> Scholia in Euripidem, ed. Schwartz, 2. 178.

λύειν ποδεῶνα ἄσκοῦ was the everyday phrase, while poetic diction, for aesthetic (and, sometimes, metrical) reasons preferred to substitute πόδα; the meaning being always, to quote Paley :<sup>20</sup> 'to untie the foot-skin of a wine-bag, i. e. to let out the liquor through the projecting skin of the animal's foot, which served (as it still does in wine-producing countries) as a spout or tap.' That this mode of tapping the wine-skin was the prevailing one, appears conclusively from the metaphor used by the oracle and from the vulgar connotation of ποδεῶν which the scholiast mentions; without prejudice, of course, to the fact that, as ancient sculptures show, wine was sometimes also poured from the *necks* of skins small enough to be carried and easily manipulated.

*Schenken*, Germ. \**skankjan* 'skink,' is therefore best explained as a direct derivative from a Germ. noun \**skank-* (*skankōn* ? cf. O. E. *sceanca*) 'shank, schenkel, ποδεῶν,' and as meaning literally 'to shank out.'

Incidentally, an interesting vista is opened with reference to *zapfen* 'tap' and the related *zipfel* 'tip, narrow, tapering end.' The feet of a skin, whether the skin is sewed up to hold liquids or not, form what in German would be called 'zipfel;' ποδεῶν denoted also various other kinds of 'zipfel,' such as a narrow strip of land extending into foreign territory, or the lower corners of a sail (cf. our 'foot of the sail'); and on the other hand the ποδεῶν was in effect the 'zapfen,' the 'tap,' of the wine-skin. The agreement is too complete to be merely accidental; we may safely assume that O. H. G. *zapfo* 'zapfen, tap' meant originally simply a 'schlauchzipfel,' a ποδεῶν.

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<sup>20</sup> *Euripides*, 113, note.